

I CLAIM

1. A network element locator for a network element (NE) of a communication network, comprising:

means for storing position data reflecting the current geographical location of said NE; and

means for transmitting said position data over said network in response to a request for position reporting.

2. A network element locator as claimed in claim 1, wherein said means for transmitting comprises a receiver for receiving said request, a transmitter for transmitting said position data and control means for controlling transfer of said position data from said means for storing, said receiver, and said transmitter.

3. A network element locator as claimed in claim 1, wherein said position data comprises NE identification and the current geographical coordinates of said NE.

4. A network element locator as claimed in claim 1, wherein said position data comprises NE identification and postal address of the location of said NE.

5. A network element locator as claimed in claim 4, wherein said position data comprises NE identification, the postal address of a network site including said NE, and the place of said NE at said site.

6. A network element locator as claimed in claim 5, wherein said position data further includes rack and shelf location of all card-packs of said NE.

7. A network element locator as claimed in claim 1 further comprising an interface for receiving geographical position information, converting it into said position data and providing said position data to said means for storing.

8. A network element locator as claimed in claim 7, further comprising means for acquiring said geographical location information and transmitting same to said NE interface.

9. A network element locator as claimed in claim 8, wherein said means for acquiring is a GPS geographical position detector embedded into said network element locator.

10. A network element locator as claimed in claim 1, wherein said means for storing comprises a dedicated memory element.

11. A network element locator as claimed in claim 1, wherein said means for storing comprises a field in the management information database (MIB) of said NE.

12. A network element locator as claimed in claim 2, wherein said receiver and transmitter are connected over a signaling and control layer of said network.

13. A network element position manager for a communication network of the type having a user-network interface for monitoring and controlling a plurality of network elements (NEs) of said network, said position manager comprising:
means for transmitting a position information request over said network; and
means for converting said position data into user-format position information.

14. A network element position manager as claimed in claim 13, wherein said means for transmitting comprises a transmitter for transmitting said position information request, a receiver for receiving said position data over said network, and control means for controlling transfer of said position data from said receiver to said position display manager.

15. A network element position manager as claimed in claim 13, wherein said user-formatted information comprises a digital map with an icon representing a network element, said icon being placed on said map in a location according to said position data.

16. A network element position manager as claimed in claim 13, wherein said user-formatted information comprises a text file providing a postal address and the identification of a network element at said postal address.

17. A method for specifying the position of a network element in a communication network, comprising:

- storing position data of said network element at said network element (NE);
- transmitting said position data to a remote location on request;
- specifying a user-formatted information for reporting said position data; and
- providing said position data to said user as said user-formatted information.

18. A method as claimed in claim 17, wherein said step of storing comprises:
during installation of said NE, obtaining said position data from a geographical position detector and storing said position data in a storing means; and
updating said position data in said storage means whenever said NE is displaced to another site.

19. A method as claimed in claim 17, wherein said step of transmitting comprises;

- from a network element locator manager, transmitting a request for position reporting to said NE; and
- from a NE locator transmitting said position data from said network element to a network management system.

20. A method as claimed in claim 17, wherein said step of specifying comprises:

- instructing a NE display manager over a user-network interface of the presentation set-up for said user-formatted information;
- converting said position data into said user-formatted information according to said presentation setup.

21. A method as claimed in claim 20, wherein said step of converting comprises invoking a digital map and associating said position data with said corresponding geographical position information received with said position data.

22. A method as claimed in claim 17, wherein said step of transmitting comprises automatically transmitting said position data whenever said NE generates an alarm.